

# The Feminist Declaration Wrapped in Eroticism: A Comparative Study of Female-themed Films

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**Abstract.** The development of campaign for Equal Rights and related concepts in modern society has indeed captured the interest of feminists regarding gender, body, and identity. Simultaneously, the primary subject matter of traditional eroticism revolves around women, indicating that eroticism offers a comprehensive and distinctive interpretation of these focal points. Within this cultural milieu, the present study examines and interprets the impact of feminism on eroticism, as well as the significant influence of eroticism on the advancement of feminism, by using two films as comparative cases. The films *Nymphomaniac* Vol. I in 2013 and *Poor Thing* in 2023 depict distinct female characters in varying manners. The audience can experience a range of emotions through the composition of the shots and the concepts communicated by the two directors. This investigation employs the methodology of feminist literary criticism to study them. The objective of this investigation is to examine the interactions between the female protagonists in these two works, as well as the gender-related themes that are portrayed.

**Keywords:** Feminism; Eroticism; Film Study.

## 1. Introduction

Female, women and gender rights, it seems that every participant in the media industry continues to talk about these topics [1, 2]. From this we can tell that feminism is a popular topic worthy of study. In the traditional female perspective of the past, eroticism was a negative promotion of female culture [3, 4]. They generally viewed the bare flesh of women and the debauchery of souls in films as a degradation of the image of women [5]. However, with an explosion of women's thinking on a cultural level, more and more media industry practitioners are willing to talk about the migration of the perspective to focus on the needs of feminism [5, 6].

Similarly, eroticism has taken a new turn, in which women are no longer merely tools for male lust or indulgent prostitutes, but tend to think independently, fight back, and awaken, empowered by more creators [7]. The process of feminist and eroticism going from intense conflict to mutual influence and tolerance is an interesting theme that deserves in-depth study and reflection. As It mentioned above, the two new eroticism filmworks *The Nymphomaniac Vol I* in 2013 and *Poor Thing* in 2023 present unique female characters in different ways.

Through the design of the shots and the ideas conveyed by the two directors, the audience can feel different emotional experiences. About which one is good and which one is bad, the author does have a tilted scale, which would be granted with opportunities to be talked about later. Back to the subject, this article believes that analyzing feminism and eroticism through different works will help the audiences gain a deeper understanding.

## 2. Methodology

The films *Nymphomaniac* and *Poor Thing* are used as the objects of study in this investigation, which is conducted using the methodology of feminist literary criticism. The purpose of this investigation is to investigate the encounters that the female protagonists in these two works have with, as well as the gender issues that are reflected in them. As an important method of literary analysis, feminist

literary criticism has the ability to effectively reveal the gender power relations, social norms, and cultural constructs that are implied in the texts. As a result, it is particularly suitable for the objectives of this study.

This study will begin by conducting a comprehensive textual analysis of both of the films that are being compared. The plot, the dialogue, the development of the characters, the visual elements, and the structure of the narrative will all be subjected to a thorough analysis. By employing this method of close reading, individuals are able to recognise the primary ideas and components that are present in the works that are associated with the subject of gender. Secondly, in order to compare and analyse the experiences and encounters that the female protagonists in the two films have, this study will utilise a comparative research method. People are able to discover the similarities and differences between various works that deal with women's issues by comparing them. This allows them to come up with insights that are more comprehensive and in-depth.

In this study, the two films will be analysed in the specific socio-historical contexts in which they were produced. In this section, we will investigate the social context, cultural climate, and gender concepts that existed during the time period in which the works were created, as well as the ways in which these elements have impacted the production of the work and how it has been received.

A number of different feminist theories will serve as the basis for the analysis that will be conducted in this study. The theory of existential feminism proposed by Simon de Beauvoir will serve as the primary methodological approach, and Judith Butler's theory of gender performance will also be utilised. This study will have a critical reflection on the methods that were utilised. It will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using the feminist literary criticism approach when analysing film texts, as well as the ways in which this approach can be combined with other analytical methods (such as psychoanalysis, postcolonial theory, and so on) in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

Using a combination of these approaches, the purpose of this research is to investigate how two films reproduce and investigate the female experience, as well as how these reproductions reflect and challenge notions of gender and power structures in contemporary society. By taking this approach, not only is it possible to conduct an in-depth analysis of particular texts, but it also establishes a connection between the analysis and broader socio-cultural contexts. As a result, it offers fresh perspectives on the fields of feminist film studies and gender studies.

### **3. Feminist theories in the *Nymphomaniac Vol I***

First of all, people must admit that one watched it because of its seductive title. (who isn't?) But actually beyond the erotic name, this film has deep feminist ideas worth exploring.

The female character, Joe, in the film is not treated as an object to receive male initiation, nor is she portrayed as a demon from hell, but another non-intentionalized image of a real human being. When she has gone through the process of awakening, chasing, climax, falling, redemption, and destruction, people can finally recognize the true feeling of an independent individual.

In the beginning, Joe has an extraordinary sensitivity to sex, and in some ways, she is somewhat like Adam. She has a kind of natural sensitivity and can surpass the average person's experience. At the moment she first felt orgasm, it was as if humans had opened their eyes and felt the world for the first time. When human beings perceive something completely new, when women awaken their thinking 'eyes', Joe, as an embodiment of a feminist spirit, constantly pursues men and tries to obtain her inner satisfaction through sex with different men. At this point, the flesh and the gasps on the screen are no longer just disgusting displays of evil desire. The creators used sexual intercourse, a previously avoided topic by the general public, as a bridge to confront the needs of the individual woman and to explore the meaning of feminism behind the vagina and the orgasm. So audiences can say, as Joe constantly pursues men, he breaks away from the traditional perspective of "women passively enduring" in eroticism and becomes an active and self-willed controller.

In another side, at first, Joe only pursued physical satisfaction, believing that love was the lowest need. But unconsciously, Joe fell in love with the man who gave her the first sexual experience, Jerome. Then Joe changed her mind? Focus on being a woman who pays whole attention to love and family? Absolutely No! If she really did that, then feminism in this eroticism is so poorly performed and shallow. One thing worth thinking is that after experiencing the wonder of love, Joe did not give up on her original goal. She cannot accept the fact that she has lost her feelings for sex and is persistent in finding back the joy she had in the past. From this, it can be seen that this film portrays a female character with strong self-awareness and who do not want to go back to the old way of love story.

#### **4. Showcase of Poor Thing**

The film, which won the Golden Lion Award for Best Film and was nominated for Oscar, has been hailed by some online as a pioneering work of feminism. First of all, people could appreciate the aesthetic of the film. Secondly, the author would like to say that this film is more like an ideological conspiracy under the banner of feminism.

Why is this eroticism not feminist, or even anti-feminist? People should understand this by beginning with Bella's setting: a doctor implants a baby's brain into the head of its mother. Her body is her mother, but her mind is a baby. She has the primitive violence that all children are born with, such as cruel killing of animals and public urination. It is a bit like what Beauvoir said: One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman [8]. This famous quote, "not born, but rather becomes" is attributed to this renowned French existentialist philosopher, writer, and feminist theorist. It appears in her groundbreaking 1949 book *The Second Sex* (*Le Deuxième Sexe*), which is considered a foundational text in modern feminist theory [8]. However as the second and third wave of feminism goes, the meaning and implications of this statement is rather unclear for people today.

If any common sense could be made to the core meaning of this saying, a distinction of social or biological implication of female identities could be an ideal start point. The quote challenges the notion that being a woman is solely determined by biological factors [9]. Instead, it suggests that womanhood is a social construct, shaped by cultural, historical, and societal influences [10]. That is to say there are several key Implications underlies. Gender as a social construct is the first one that can be drawn. The quote implies that gender roles and expectations are not innate but learned and internalized through socialization. People would have chances to place themselves into the role of film works and be easily finding they would act quite natural as the male characters, who are producing the basic shape of socialization. Distinction between sex and gender is also mentioned here. It highlights the difference between biological sex and socially constructed gender identity. following these spirits, critique of biological determinism would argue that there shall be the statement challenges the idea that biology alone determines one's destiny or social role.

If people urge for a particular definition of continental or American style of feminism, then the theory advocates process of becoming might be helpful for a Hollywood version of female identity: It suggests that becoming a woman is an ongoing process influenced by societal norms, expectations, and personal experiences. If people has already accept this famous saying as a core concept of feminism, they will be familiar with its impact on a holistic feminist theory. This concept has had such a profound impact on feminist theory and gender studies. It laid the groundwork for understanding gender as performative, later expanded upon by theorists like Judith Butler. It opened up discussions about the ways in which society shapes and constrains women's experiences and opportunities. It also, none the less encouraged examination of how gender roles are reinforced through various social institutions like family, education, and media. That is also why the comparative targets this article has chosen.

A little contemporary relevance should be made to end the discussion of conceptual influences. Even today, this quote remains relevant in discussions about. Gender identity and expression, the fluidity of gender roles in modern society have a ot to do with the core concept of female role. Intersectionality in feminist theory and relative critiques of gender essentialism are at the same time intertwined.

Beauvoir's statement continues to provoke thought and debate about the nature of gender, identity, and the complex interplay between biology and society in shaping human experiences.

## 5. Revealing eroticism

But is this really the case? When Bella donates all her money, she chooses to work in a brothel in order to make ends meet. The lawyer, with whom Bella had previously eloped, is very upset and yells at her, so Bella delivers one of the most important, and ironic, lines of the film: we are our own means of production. Means of production? Whenever there is a technical term in a sentence that is not easily understood, the public is always confused by the letters. In the time when barriers to chastity were added, if women were looking forward to sexual liberation, then they were about to go to the other extreme: selling themselves freely? The exploitation of women can never be labeled as a female awakening or even feminism. This way of thinking only makes it easier for men to gaze at women and exploit their freedoms.

Feminism is the portrayal of women's life experience. Feminism is not authoritarianism, it is not turning your enemies into ants on the ground and then ravaging them with wanton brutality. At the end of the film, Bella is informed of everything, and she finds out what her father, who went against ethics and tried to act as God, using both humans and animals as experimental tools, did to her. After Bella finishes her travels exploring the world (let's say for the moment that this process serves as a path to female awakening in the minds of the creators), she chooses to become the new devil 'father'. She returned to that place of birth, disguising herself as the God who created all. Bella experienced growth, but still wanted to do the same things as her father. She learned to decoupage and took over her father's work. Is the way for women to grow up is to inflict on others the pain they experienced? This clearly doesn't manifest any innovative thematic ideas. This article would not think the ending stepped outside the clichéd narrative and simply tried to hide female suffering by swapping roles.

## 6. Conclusion

There is no shortage of notorious works promoting feminism in the modern eroticism area. As people can see, there are always endless possibilities for artistic creation. From women bashing eroticism to women praising eroticism, the continuous development and growing maturity of feminist thought have played a key role. Different eroticism have been given different vitality by their creators. People can access alternative forms of feminist consciousness in them and also encounter failed feminist presentations. Although it gives a different perspective to the public, the diverse attempts of the creators have given the public a more immersive understanding of the friction and fusion between eroticism and feminism. In order to bring the conversation about conceptual influences to a fruitful conclusion, it is essential to incorporate some contemporary relevance. This quotation is still relevant in discussions that are taking place in the present day and age. The fundamental idea of a female role is intricately connected to the concepts of gender identity and expression, as well as the fluidity of gender roles in contemporary society. Both the critical examination of gender essentialism and the concepts of intersectionality in feminist theory are closely connected to one another due to their close relationship. The assertion made by Beauvoir continues to serve as a stimulus for contemplation and conversation concerning the fundamental nature of gender and identity, as well as the complex relationship that exists between biology and society in terms of its influence on human experiences.

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